



**Sonny Perdue**  
*Governor*

10 Park Place, Suite 200, Atlanta, Georgia 30303  
(404) 656-5957

**Holly A. Robinson, Ed.D.**  
*Commissioner*

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact: Stacey Moore

404-656-0239

[Stacey.Moore@dec.al.ga.gov](mailto:Stacey.Moore@dec.al.ga.gov)

**Georgia Head Start significantly impacts 28,000 children in 2008-2009**

**ATLANTA, Ga., (January 4, 2010)** – The 2008-2009 data for Georgia Head Start, Early Head Start and Migrant/Seasonal Head Start was released by the Georgia Head Start Collaboration Office and there is good news for Georgia’s children. Last year, Georgia Head Start was funded to serve 23,247 children – however, the program was actually able to reach nearly 28,000 children by offering blended services to children and their families. Georgia’s Pre-K Program and Head Start are able to serve 4,000 more children by partnering to provide blended caseloads statewide.

“Head Start has formed a strong partnership with Georgia’s Pre-K Program in order to provide services for more three-year-old children as well as additional comprehensive services to four year olds,” said Georgia Head Start Collaboration Director Janice Haker. “This type of collaboration helps to ensure that we are providing higher quality educational opportunities and more services to Georgia’s children to help prepare them for success in school.”

Georgia Head Start and Early Head Start programs provide educational, social, medical, dental, and parental support services, as well as services for children with disabilities throughout the state. Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning houses the Head Start State Collaboration Office and administers Georgia’s Pre-K Program. In order to participate in Head Start and Early Head Start programs, families must meet the Head Start Family Income Eligibility Guidelines for 2009.

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Haker shared detailed report findings that include:

- Approximately 3,500 children were served in blended Head Start/Pre-K classrooms, thereby providing higher quality and more expansive services to eligible children;
- 4,959 children received special education or related services for a disability;
- 321 homeless children were served;
- 456 foster children were served;
- 94% of Head Start and 99% of Early Head Start children had medical insurance at the end of the enrollment year;
- 76% of all Head Start teachers had either an AA (Associate's Degree) or BA (Bachelor's Degree) in Early Childhood Development;
- 74% of all Head Start assistant teachers had acquired a Child Development Certificate (CDA) or an AA in Early Childhood Development.

For more information about Georgia Head Start, visit [www.decal.ga.gov](http://www.decal.ga.gov) and click the "Head Start" tab at the top of the page.

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Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning is responsible for meeting the child care and early education needs of Georgia's children and their families. It administers the nationally recognized Georgia's Pre-K Program, licenses child care centers and home-based child care, administers federal nutrition programs, and manages voluntary quality enhancement programs.

The department also houses the Head Start State Collaboration Office, distributes federal funding to enhance the quality and availability of child care, and works collaboratively with Georgia child care resource and referral agencies and organizations throughout the state to enhance early care and education. For more information, go to [www.decal.ga.gov](http://www.decal.ga.gov).